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Constantin Frantz and the intellectual history of Bonapartism and Caesarism: a reassessment

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ABSTRACT:

The conservative German publicist and political theorist, Constantin Frantz (1817-1891), occupies an ambiguous place in German intellectual history. Some, such as Friedrich Meinecke, located him within the rich intellectual tradition of German federalism, highlighting his hostility to the idea of the “nation-state” and the traditions of nationalism, *Realpolitik* and militarism. Others, by contrast, have situated him within a long genealogy of German fascism, identifying his remarkable 1852 work, *Louis Napoleon*, as a kind of precursor or antecedent of twentieth-century fascist ideology. This interpretation raises broader questions about the historiography on Bonapartism and Caesarism, which has often been motivated by an interest in the intellectual origins of modern fascism. The present article supplies a reinterpretation of Frantz’s thinking about Bonapartism (*Napoleonismus*) and Caesarism by focusing on a much broader range of his intellectual output and by tracking the development of his view of Bonapartism’s significance between 1851 and the early 1870s. The main outcome is not just to question Frantz’s place in the “prehistory” of fascism, but also to show how deeply nineteenth-century debates about Bonapartism were connected to concerns about liberalism, democracy, nationalism and imperialism.

ARTICLE:

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To what extent are modern liberal democracies vulnerable to subversion by authoritarian, illiberal demagogues? This question – by no means irrelevant in our own time – was debated particularly intensively during the three decades after 1848, a period in which a toxic combination of demagoguery, nationalism and imperialism appeared to be driving many

European states towards a modern rerun of ancient Rome's Caesarist disaster. One of the most intriguing nineteenth-century answers to the question was outlined by the conservative German publicist and political thinker Constantin Frantz (1817-1891). Resident in Paris during the Bonapartist *coup d'état* of December 2nd 1851, and later a vocal critic of the demagogic manoeuvres of Otto von Bismarck during the period of the foundation of the German *Reich*, Frantz was a careful analyst of the new imperial regime that emerged in France after 1851, reflected seriously on the ways in which liberal-democratic politics might spawn their own forms of plebiscitary Caesarism, and addressed the ramifications of Bonapartism for the future of the international state system. For anybody seeking to understand the ways in which the subjects of Bonapartism and Caesarism were connected to discussions of liberalism, democracy, nationalism and imperialism in German political thought after 1848, Frantz's works constitute an excellent starting point.

Yet there is a further reason why Frantz's works deserve re-examination, and that is his deeply ambiguous place in some of the central narratives that run through modern German intellectual history. On the one hand, Frantz has often been read as a theorist of German and European federalism whose writings were characterised by an abiding hostility to the idea of the nation-state, by distrust of amoral *Realpolitik*, and by a Christian-inflected, cosmopolitan vision of a peaceful, European federation of peoples (*Völkerbund*).¹ This view puts Frantz at odds with the dominant, Prussocentric "national tradition" in German historiography that found its nineteenth-century culmination in the works of Heinrich von Treitschke and aligns him, instead, with Germany's remarkably rich intellectual traditions of federalism.² Although this line of interpretation found adherents in the Weimar period, it made Frantz a particularly attractive figure for historians writing after 1945, who searched for intellectual alternatives to Germany's recent experience of aggressive, exclusionary nationalism.³ Friedrich Meinecke,

writing about “the German catastrophe” in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, placed Frantz alongside the Swiss historian Jacob Burckhardt as authors who believed that Bismarck’s policy was “destroying certain foundations of Western culture and the community of states” and who resisted the “victory of Machiavellism over the principles of morality and justice in international relations.”⁴ Franz Schnabel wrote admiringly in 1950 of Frantz’s federalist critique of the united German nation-state, and praised his prescience in foreseeing that Europe’s “great powers” would come to be superseded by competing world empires.⁵ The federalist interpretation has been restated most recently in an authoritative article by Winfried Becker.⁶ On the other hand, Frantz has been situated within the long intellectual genealogy of German fascism. This view rests on the apparent affinities between his account of nineteenth-century Bonapartism and twentieth-century ideas of plebiscitary Caesarism and dictatorship. Here Frantz appears not so much as a proto-federalist as a proto-fascist.

The story of how this latter view emerged is itself fascinating. Frantz’s best-known work, his 1852 *Louis Napoleon*, was reissued in 1933 by J. P. Mayer (under the pseudonym Franz Kemper) in an edition which pointed out the relevance of the text for understanding the Nazi seizure of power (*Machtergreifung*) in January 1933.⁷ As Mayer noted in his Foreword and Introduction, Frantz’s account was of “decisive significance” for the “social-historical situation of the present,” and thus shed light on the rise of a *Führer* who had superseded the Weimar “party state” and spoke to the masses in their own language.⁸ While Mayer’s own intention was to use Frantz’s text as an indication of the dangers of plebiscitary politics, his edition may have prompted the attention lavished on Frantz by writers like Ewald Schaper, who wrote in 1940 that Frantz “pointed the way towards a new, synthetic epoch [*synthetisches Zeitalter*]...which only became a reality in the twentieth century, in National

Socialism and fascism.”⁹ A similarly overblown teleological interpretation, connecting Frantz’s alleged “nationalism” to Hitler’s racist *Weltanschauung*, appeared in Peter Viereck’s 1941 *Metapolitics* (whose title was inspired by a quotation from Frantz).¹⁰ More surprisingly perhaps, affinities between Frantz’s ideas and those of fascist ideologues have also been identified by the circle of historians involved in the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, which began to appear in the 1970s. Reinhart Koselleck’s interest in Frantz is visible in his famous article on “Crisis” (*Krise*), but more significant is the suggestive link that Koselleck made, in his 1977 essay “Neuzeit,” between Frantz’s conception of Bonapartist dictatorship and Carl Schmitt’s notion of the “sovereign dictator.”¹¹ This was little more than a hint, but Dieter Groh had already made a more explicit claim in the article on Caesarism (and related terms) that appeared in the first (1972) volume of the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*. According to Groh, Frantz’s rejection of parliamentarism, along with his “more-or-less explicit *Führerkult*,” constituted “one of the intellectual-historical roots of fascist ideologies and even of Lenin’s theory of revolution.”¹² Subsequent historians considered whether Frantz should be described as a Bonapartist precursor of Schmitt, while yet others have underscored his antisemitism and his (alleged) “pan-Germanism” as yet further indications of his “Nazi-like doctrine.”¹³ And while more recent historians have not necessarily endorsed the image of Frantz as a forerunner of National Socialist ideals, his reputation as a German Bonapartist appears to have stuck. For instance, in his contribution to Peter Baehr’s and Melvin Richter’s edited volume *Dictatorship in History and Theory* (2004), David E. Barclay has written of Frantz’s “avowedly Bonapartist views” and of his “support for a ‘Caesarist’, plebiscitary state.”¹⁴

This article offers an alternative reading of Frantz’s thinking about Bonapartism and Caesarism as this developed in the period between 1848 and 1871. Its central argument is

that the description of Frantz as a German Bonapartist rests on a highly selective reading of his publications from 1851-52 and downplays his subsequent intellectual output in which he was wholly critical of modern Bonapartism (or Caesarism) and its implications for Europe. In order to see this, it is necessary to position Frantz's evolving account of *Napoleonismus* – the term he consistently used for the phenomenon in France – against his assessment of the changing nature of international relations, his increasingly critical posture towards liberalism (in both Germany and Europe), and his awareness that a reckless adherence to the “principle of nationality” (*Nationalitätsprinzip*) had the capacity to launch Europe into destructive militarism and warfare among latter-day Caesarist rulers. More broadly, the article challenges Groh's claim that Frantz should be understood as an intellectual forerunner of twentieth-century fascist ideology. The quest for antecedents in intellectual history is notoriously prone to slip into various anachronistic “mythologies,” as Quentin Skinner pointed out many years ago, and these may be especially acute when considering the intellectual origins of fascism.¹⁵ In Frantz's case, there is a particular risk of transforming him into a kind of proto-Schmittian, as if his critical perspective upon nineteenth-century liberalism and parliamentarism inevitably entailed a positive endorsement of the kind of plebiscitary Caesarism that so captivated Schmitt in the 1920s.¹⁶ This, I think, would be to succumb to a form of the “package logic” that, in a different context, Anthony La Vopa has identified as a particular peril for historians of ideas.¹⁷ This is not to say that all difficulties of interpretation can be resolved by the application of a thoroughgoing historical contextualisation. It is to suggest that we need understand nineteenth-century accounts of Bonapartism and Caesarism as far as possible on their own terms, without entirely closing off the valid historical question of the relationship between Bonapartism, Caesarism and fascism.

Frantz's reputation as a German Bonapartist and a precursor of National Socialist ideology rests largely on the evidence of his 1852 work, *Louis Napoleon*. This short book, which is sometimes compared with such famous contemporary works as Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852) or Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's *La Révolution sociale démontrée par le coup d'état du 2 décembre 1851*, was certainly among the most distinctive German contributions to the European debate about the nature and prospects of the new Napoleonic regime established in 1851-52.¹⁸ The text is perhaps best compared with a near-contemporary work like Bruno Bauer's *Rußland und das Germanenthum* (1853), which also addressed the relationship between a mass-based "extreme democracy" and the revival of a Bonapartist *Kaisertum* in France, and which bore the marks of its author's growing disillusionment with the work of Hegel.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the pamphlet was not the only work of Frantz's from these years that addressed the subjects of Bonapartism and Caesarism. He had first considered the prospect of a Bonapartist *coup d'état* soon after his arrival in France (in the autumn of 1851) in a memorandum to the Prussian interior minister, Otto Theodor von Manteuffel, under whose auspices Frantz had undertaken his journey to Paris.²⁰ The link between Frantz and Manteuffel is significant, because it is sometimes taken as a marker of Frantz's commitment to a modernizing, interventionist monarchy in Prussia, in contrast to the more traditional corporatist legitimism of the "High Conservative" Gerlach circle.²¹ He also addressed the problem of Bonapartism in a further publication from 1852, entitled *Die Staatskrankheit*, which contained an explicit discussion of *Napoleonismus* as the modern form of *Cäsarismus*.²² We need to consider all three of these works in order to obtain a clear perspective on Frantz's thinking about *Napoleonismus* in the early 1850s.

The October 1851 memorandum to Manteuffel is important because it contains the seeds of some of the ideas that Frantz would later express in *Louis Napoleon*. The purpose of the memorandum was to convey to Manteuffel detailed information about the key economic and political developments in France at the time. He also discussed changes to the systems of suffrage and representation in France between 1849 and 1851, a topic that will have been relevant to Manteuffel, who had played a role in the reform of the Prussian electoral law earlier in 1851. Yet the central theme of this memorandum was undoubtedly Frantz's deep hostility to what he called the *Repräsentativsystem* (and sometimes *Parlamentarismus*) – one of the abiding preoccupations of Frantz's political thought.²³ Here we can certainly detect a partial endorsement of what we might call the Bonapartist combination of mass politics with an authoritarian state, and of its capacity to transcend liberal parliamentary vacillation. Frantz wrote admiringly of Louis-Napoleon's exploitation of universal suffrage as a means of neutralising his parliamentary opponents, such as the interior minister (and liberal political economist), Léon Faucher.²⁴ He argued for substituting a rational system of "administrative reform" in place of the chaotic "agitations of the *Repräsentativsystem*." He suggested that a Bonapartist regime was likely to be far more viable in France than a restored hereditary monarchy. Finally, he prefigured one of the themes of the later *Louis Napoleon* by suggesting that the establishment of a Napoleonic order in France was likely to be compatible with the peace of Europe (*die Ruhe Europas*).²⁵

Many of these arguments were reworked and amplified in *Louis Napoleon* itself, which, if read teleologically, and in isolation from Frantz's other works, does indeed seem to support some of the bolder claims made about Frantz's place in prehistory of German fascism. The key argument of *Louis Napoleon* concerned the necessity of *Napoleonismus* for the situation in which France now found itself. France had undergone a destructive revolution at the end

of the eighteenth century which had destroyed the hierarchical society of the *ancien régime*, and the resulting society, in which the people were an atomized, undifferentiated mass, demanded the establishment of a Napoleonic-style regime. In particular, Frantz argued that the emerging Napoleonic empire was far superior to both the bourgeois July Monarchy and the parliamentary Second Republic, both of which he associated with elitism and “organised demagoguery.” (It is worth noting that Frantz never associated *Napoleonismus* with demagoguery, which for him was a phenomenon of elitist parliamentarism).²⁶ While some countries, such as England and the United States, could handle the demands of representative government, atomised and centralized countries like France would only degenerate into demagoguery if they sought to replicate this. Running alongside this claim about the superiority of *Napoleonismus* to *Parlamentarismus* for the circumstances of post-revolutionary France, Frantz also criticised the liberal faith in “doctrines” or parliamentary discussion, and instead celebrated the rule of vital, decisive personalities.²⁷

Much of the body of Frantz’s text was devoted to exploring the nature of *Napoleonismus* as a distinctive type of modern republic. It is crucial to emphasise this republican dimension, although Frantz distinguished *Napoleonismus* from both the republics of antiquity, as well as the modern, federal republics of Switzerland and the United States.²⁸ Napoleonic republicanism was instead characterised by the dominance of the executive over the legislature, the primacy of “physical force” (i.e. the army), and – crucially – a radical revision of the classical republican notion of dictatorship. This is indicated in the following passage, which is also cited by Koselleck:

One should not be afraid of this word dictatorship (*Diktatur*), it is in reality so. The dictatorship constitutes the essential constitutional form (*Verfassungsform*) of the

French Republic, which is nevertheless a republic, since dictatorship is not a royal office, but rather belongs to republican development. However, whereas the dictatorship was only exceptionally employed in other republics, here it is fundamental, because the French Republic constitutes a completely exceptional state-form, the like of which has never been seen before.²⁹

At the same time, *Napoleonismus* was by no means undemocratic, since it was grounded on popular sovereignty and gave expression, at least in theory, to the “will of the people” (*Volkswille*). Pointing to the widespread support for Napoleon’s *coup d’état* among the majority of France’s (male) inhabitants, Frantz argued that the democratic critics of the *coup* were being inconsistent and even hypocritical: while democrats claimed to endorse majority rule and popular sovereignty, they failed to accept its logic when the masses endorsed authoritarian leaders through plebiscites.³⁰ He explicitly described the regime as a republic resting “essentially on democratic foundations,” where the state power was the representative of the “collective will” (*Kollektivwille*). The vision here was of a kind of reciprocal moral union of people and its leader (*Chef*), in which the leader would devote himself to serving the people, while embodying its collective will.³¹ Seen from this perspective, Frantz implied that *Napoleonismus* might be seen as a more authentic version of democracy than the indirect forms of liberal parliamentarism (*Parlamentarismus*) that currently existed in Britain, and had previously existed under the July Monarchy. Napoleonism, Frantz summarised, was a “republic with democratic social-forms and Napoleonic government-form.”³²

Another area in which Frantz expressed enthusiasm about *Napoleonismus* in 1852 was that of international politics. In the chapter entitled “Der Napoleonismus und Europa” he was strikingly positive about the likely international repercussions of Louis-Napoleon’s rule,

claiming that a renewed Napoleonic regime within France would constitute a beneficial counterweight against the rising power of Britain and Russia. Napoleonism would, furthermore, reinvigorate an increasingly stagnant continent, without embarking on the sorts of conquest that had characterised the first Napoleonic Empire.³³ Frantz even went so far as to depict Louis-Napoleon as a “new Hercules,” clearing out the Augean stables of a stagnant continent and slaying the hydra of demagoguery.³⁴ And although he recognized the military basis of the new regime, he rejected any straightforward parallel between the emerging Second Empire and the praetorian empire of post-republican Rome. In 1852, at least, Napoleonism was compatible with Europe’s peace and stability.

Despite all this, some caveats about Frantz’s alleged “Bonapartism” are in order. First of all, we should simply note that Frantz’s claim that Bonapartism had become “unavoidable” in France does not imply a warm endorsement of the regime on its own merits. Second, and relatedly, it is crucial to recognize that Frantz was by no means calling for the establishment of a Napoleonic state in Prussia, or in any other German state. While Bonapartism was well-suited to France’s situation as a post-revolutionary “atomized” society, it was in no sense suitable for societies (including England and Germany) that still retained, at least partially, the “aristocratic-hierarchical” structures of the *ancien régime*.³⁵ One of the leading themes of Frantz’s political thought was his deep scepticism towards the idea of imposing foreign constitutional models on countries for which they were unfitted, and he was particularly scathing of Tocqueville’s efforts to use the United States constitution as a model for a reformed French republic.³⁶ This was in line with his later criticisms of the Frankfurt parliamentarians of 1848-49, who he believed were engaged in a similarly misguided project to transform German states into modern constitutional republics.³⁷

Frantz fervently wanted Prussia to avoid the fate of the French *ancien régime*, and suggested that the best means towards this was for the Prussian monarchy to bring itself into a living relationship with “all the factors of national development.”³⁸ Here Frantz probably had in mind a version of the “social monarchy” idea that inspired many German conservatives in this period, an idea that centred on promoting the Crown’s role as a protector of the “masses” and as a force for social cohesion. This would have brought him fairly close to Manteuffel, and possibly to some of his more intellectually eclectic contemporaries, such as Lorenz Stein or Jozef Maria von Radowitz.³⁹ Frantz had expressed enthusiasm for this sort of reformed monarchical order, transcending social divisions, in his writings from the 1840s, when he called for the royal “organisation of the masses” as a route to strengthening social stability and avoiding the perils of modern constitutionalism.⁴⁰ More details as to the precise means by which this could be accomplished appeared in Frantz’s *Die Staatskrankheit* (published somewhat later in 1852), in which he claimed that the key task facing Europe’s remaining dynastic rulers was to strengthen the “social bond” (*Band*) between monarchy and people, and thereby to reconcile the various elements of a divided nation.⁴¹ Here he was emphatic that this was quite different from Caesarism or Napoleonism, which rested on popular sovereignty and issued in a naked form of intensified state power (*Staatsgewalt*). Instead, he argued that vigorous royal leadership in resolving the modern “social question”, in organising modern industrial associations, and in breaking the contradictions between bureaucracy, parliament and aristocracy would serve to restore a harmonious, “organic” relationship between monarchy and nation, while neutralising the appeal of republicanism, constitutionalism and Caesarism.⁴² Finally, in *Die Staatskrankheit*, Frantz was already warning against the potential dangers that a resurgent French imperial Bonapartism might pose to the security of Germany, noting that “I do not in any sense mean to recommend the Napoleonic constitution...I say only, that this constitution is capable of fostering a very great

development of power (*Machtentwicklung*).”⁴³ All of this strongly suggests that while Frantz may have seen *Napoleonismus* as a viable regime for modern France, he was ambiguous about its implications for Europe, and firmly opposed to the establishment of anything similar in Germany.

3

The 1852 pamphlet on Napoleon’s *coup d’état* tends to be the single piece of evidence cited by those historians who have stressed Frantz’s position in the putative genealogy of German fascism. But *Louis Napoleon* was merely one text within a long sequence of publications in which Frantz grappled with the problems of democracy, liberalism, nationalism and Caesarism in Europe. Probably the most important subsequent work in this sequence was Frantz’s *Untersuchungen über das europäische Gleichgewicht* (1859), which was a major contribution to contemporary discussions about the future of Europe and the shape of the emerging German nation-state.⁴⁴ This text is central to my argument because it illuminates how Frantz connected his analysis of *Napoleonismus* to a wider account of the changing structure of international relations. The text should be situated in two immediate contexts: the first was the debate about the ramifications of France’s interference in northern Italy in 1859 (which was widely seen as an exercise in Bonapartist *Imperialismus*), and the second was the foundation, in the same year, of the German *Nationalverein*, which would become an important institutional forum for the National Liberal party, which advocated a *kleindeutsch* solution to the German question.⁴⁵ The Italian dimension was particularly important, since Napoleon III’s intervention had sparked controversy within Germany about the role it should play in the contest between France and Austria (whose rule in Lombardy and Venetia Frantz

supported), and more generally about the viability of a unitary Italian state.⁴⁶ Frantz, it is worth noting, was deeply sceptical towards the prospect of creating any form of federal or unitary state from the chaos of what he saw as Italy's fragmentary local patriotisms in 1859, and he later looked back critically on Italy's unification as leading to the formation of yet another centralised, but dangerously unstable, European state.⁴⁷ The broader intellectual context was the nineteenth-century debate about the appropriate relationship between "nation" and "state," a topic which had preoccupied Frantz since the late 1840s.⁴⁸ By the late 1850s, he had come to think of the *Nationalitätsprinzip* – the principle that state and (linguistic) nation should be coterminous – as a form of modern political dogmatism and even as an instrument of Bonapartist propaganda, which was now being thoughtlessly pursued in both Italy and Germany.⁴⁹ The main purpose of his book on the European balance of power was thus to sketch out a radical federalist alternative to the politics of nationality and militarism as these were playing out across Europe in the 1850s. Much more could be said about that, but for our present purposes we need especially to note how far Frantz's evaluation of *Napoleonismus* changed between 1852 and 1859, as he placed increasing emphasis on the threats posed by a democratically-legitimated French "empire" to the stability of Europe.

Frantz's discussion of *Napoleonismus* in 1859 was set against a broader account of the dramatic changes which had unfolded in the international state system since the 1815 Treaty of Vienna. The central claim here was that the European balance of power no longer provided an effective guarantee of peace and stability. The idea of a European Pentarchy under the dominance of five "Great Powers" had always been incoherent, but was revealed as completely defunct in the wake of the 1848/49 Revolutions and the Crimean War. Even if Europe had once been a kind of "moral community" based on shared principles, it now rested on the cut-and-thrust of a purely mechanical conception of balance.⁵⁰ Frantz's attack on the

“mechanical” and artificial nature of the European balance had deep roots in German political thought, and to some extent echoed similar criticisms of the European balance made by Johann Gottlieb Fichte, whose *Addresses to the German Nation* (from the winter of 1806-7) were occasionally cited by Frantz in the *Untersuchungen*.⁵¹ But he was also closely attuned to novel developments of the 1850s. Most dramatically, Frantz claimed the Vienna order had been definitively superseded by a new system of competing world powers. The rise of the United States, the opening up of China to trade, the discovery of gold in California and Australia, and the intrusion of European powers into Africa and India meant that modern history had become “world history” (*Weltgeschichte*) in the true sense.⁵² The broad picture was of an increasingly chaotic international scene in which Europe was at the mercy of enormous, competing military-imperial states.

Frantz identified two specific threats to the stability and independence of Europe and, in particular, the German states that made up its core. The first of these was Russia, which now constituted a mortal threat to the independence of Germany and western Europe. He was particularly scathing of a work entitled *Die europäische Pentarchie* (1839), which had proposed a kind of Russian protectorate over the small and medium-sized states of the German Confederation.⁵³ In alerting his readers to the Russian threat, Frantz was echoing one of the key obsessions of German thinkers in the period, as also exemplified in Bauer’s *Rußland und der Germanenthum*. Like Bauer, Frantz compared the precarious situation of the German states *vis-a-vis* Russia to the city-states of ancient Greece, which were perpetually threatened by larger imperial hegemon.⁵⁴

The other major threat to Germany (and hence to Europe) was post-revolutionary France, and it was in this connection that Frantz developed further his analysis of *Napoleonismus*. He

emphasised more fully than he had done in 1852 the character of the imperial ruler as a “saviour of society,” who was undertaking socially-beneficial projects such as the opening of the Suez Canal or the eradication of pauperism.⁵⁵ But the key to Frantz’s delineation of *Napoleonismus* remained his verdict on the distinctive nature of French egalitarian democracy. Echoing the arguments he had made in 1852, Frantz described *Napoleonismus* as a modern democratic regime, grounded on “the inclinations of the masses and the demand of equality.”⁵⁶ Equality and universal suffrage went hand-in-hand with the survival of the Second Empire, even while they undermined the stability of old monarchies.⁵⁷ Nonetheless, Frantz’s emphasis on the disguised democratic foundations of the Bonapartist state was by no means an endorsement. The general picture was of a democratically-legitimated regime in which the “entire state power is centralised in the person of the Emperor (*Imperator*).”⁵⁸ Because Bonapartism was a post-revolutionary regime that disavowed all historical structures of law and authority, it ultimately defaulted into an autocratic regime based on pure coercion.⁵⁹

The new feature of the Bonapartist regime that Frantz chose to emphasise in 1859 was its commitment to the “principle of nationality” (*Nationalitätsprinzip*). Frantz argued that the principle of nationality was in fact a close cousin of democracy, because abstract conceptions of popular sovereignty easily defaulted into a “community of blood and language.”⁶⁰ It was this emphasis on the proximity of popular sovereignty and nationality that pointed to Frantz’s initial change of mind over the consequences of *Napoleonismus* for modern European politics. While in *Louis Napoleon* he had hoped that French *Napoleonismus* might rejuvenate a tired continent mired in stultifying constitutionalism, he now described it as direct route towards war and empire. Frantz attacked the first Napoleon for attempting to revive a Roman idea of *Imperium* that would create a uniform, united Europe under French domination.⁶¹ But what

had become more obvious by the 1850s was the ease with which revolutionary nationalisms across Europe could be exploited by the Napoleonic regime.⁶² Citing the various Napoleonic projects for intervention in Italy and Poland – as detailed in the publications of Arthur de la Guéronnière, the Second Empire pamphleteer – Frantz claimed that Bonaparte was using the rhetoric of nationality as a means of pursuing an expansionist politics that threatened the stability of the state system.⁶³ The ultimate consequence of pursuing a politics guided by the *Nationalitätsprinzip* would be the division of Europe between France and Russia in a kind of joint *imperium* or continental *Dictatur*.⁶⁴ Furthermore, Frantz depicted *Napoleonismus* as a regime whose principle was expansion, and which had to remake the world in its own image if it was to survive.⁶⁵ This explained Napoleon III's sequence of catastrophic attempts at military intervention across Europe (his notorious Mexican misadventure had yet to take place).

Frantz's alternative to this frightening vision was based upon a revived German federation that would form a counterweight to, and would ultimately dissolve, the large military powers that threatened central Europe.⁶⁶ First and foremost, this demanded that both Prussia and Austria relinquish their pretensions to be "Great Powers" (*Größmächte*), and hence pave the way for a genuinely federal politics anchored in the old German Confederation (*Bund*). Much of the detail of Frantz's book was taken up with a historical narrative designed to show that neither Prussia nor Austria could be considered "self-sufficient and independent powers."⁶⁷ This was an argument which directly contradicted earlier German claims, such as that made in Leopold von Ranke's famous 1833 essay on "The Great Powers," that Prussia possessed all the essential criteria for independent statehood.⁶⁸ Frantz's alternative to Prussian military dominance was rooted in an idea of a German federation (*Staatenbund*) that would unite and transcend the divisions between Prussia, Austria and the small- and medium-

sized states of southern and western Germany. This was a deeply cosmopolitan vision of a future Germany as grounded on multiple pacific federations, instead of a unified, warlike nation-state.⁶⁹ Here Frantz was also evoking a more widespread nineteenth-century contrast between the dual legacies of Rome and Germany to modern European politics, advocating a revival of Germany's ancient federal traditions as an alternative to the centralised, neo-Roman *Imperialismus* of France.⁷⁰ This, he claimed, would lead to the overcoming of the narrow politics of self-interest (*selbstsüchtigen Interessenpolitik*) which had characterised European international relations since the Renaissance.⁷¹ This, incidentally, was related to his admiration for Fichte, who Frantz interpreted as advocating a return to a much older, federalist notion of German nationhood.⁷² Ultimately, Frantz suggested, a German *Staatenbund* would provide the seedbed for the transformation of the entire western European state system into a "western federation" (*abendländischen Staatenbund*).⁷³

The evidence of Frantz's book on the European balance of power allows us to draw three main conclusions about the way his thinking about *Napoleonismus* developed after 1852. First, it is abundantly clear that by 1859 Frantz cannot be described as a German Bonapartist in any respect. His descriptions of the French imperial regime were consistently critical, and even if he still saw Napoleonic politics as an appropriate regime-type for France, he nevertheless condemned it as a regime of naked coercion, built upon the unstable foundations of populist acclamation. Second, the *Untersuchungen* evince Frantz's growing tendency to conflate Bonapartism with nationalism and centralization, while contrasting both of these with his own preferred politics of federalism. It is worth noting that this association between Bonapartism and the politics of unitary nation-states was echoed by contemporaries with federalist sympathies in this period (1859-60).⁷⁴ Julius Fröbel, a largely sympathetic reader of Frantz's work, drove home Frantz's point when he claimed that the *kleindeutsch* vision of

a Prussian-led Germany would ultimately necessitate the arrival of a Bonaparte.⁷⁵ This theme became increasingly prominent in Frantz's thinking in the 1860s, during which he identified a slow drift towards Caesarist military domination, driven by Prussia.⁷⁶ Third, and most generally, the *Untersuchungen* provide an interesting example of the ways in which mid-nineteenth-century thinkers connected the domestic to the international, and considered the implications of the political democratisation of European states for the character of international relations. Frantz's argument was that the politics of revolutionary democracy, as exemplified in the history of France after 1789, was doomed to inspire repeated cycles of war, militarism and empire under the aegis of Caesarist political leaders. This remained an abiding theme of Frantz's thought into the 1860s and 1870s.⁷⁷

4

Frantz's understanding of the threat posed by *Napoleonismus* to European politics underwent a final conceptual shift during the 1860s, although anticipations of this can be found in his earlier writings. The most obvious indication of this change was his increasing tendency to use the European term "Caesarism" (*Cäsarismus*) in place of the more unconventional *Napoleonismus*. But this purely linguistic shift pointed, as such things often do, to a deeper modulation in Frantz's assessment of Caesarism's significance. While in the 1850s he had seen *Napoleonismus* as a specifically French phenomenon, generated by the unique combination of a centralized polity with an atomized mass society, he began from the middle of the 1860s to describe Caesarism as a more general prospect facing Europe's larger states. The basis of this new claim was Frantz's striking association of Caesarism with the politics of liberalism, a word which had just as complex a range of meanings in Germany as it did

elsewhere. In Frantz's own usage, which broadly corresponded with that of many contemporary German critics of bourgeois society, both socialist and conservative, liberalism was associated primarily with individualism, market egoism, and a kind of shallow legalism in politics (needless to say, these associations were far from capturing the diversity of nineteenth-century liberalisms).⁷⁸ Yet in sharp contrast with most nineteenth-century thinkers, who tended to distinguish liberalism and Caesarism as two incompatible, even mutually-opposed, regime-types, Frantz argued that the liberal-individualistic foundations of modern systems of political representation had the capacity to generate coercive Caesarist leadership. This claim, in turn, became one of Frantz's key arguments against the North German Confederation after 1866, which he viewed as yet another form of Prussian military dominance under the guise of a new *Repräsentativsystem*.⁷⁹ Accordingly, this part of the article will sketch out and analyse Frantz's rather surprising – by the standards of modern histories of political thought – association of *Liberalismus* and *Cäsarismus*.

Some clues to the way this association developed can already be detected in Frantz's slightly earlier *Vorschule zur Physiologie der Staaten* (1857), a work whose expressed aim was to lay out a new “political physiology” or “natural science” of the modern state. He positioned this approach in an empirical tradition of political thinking, stretching back through Karl Salomon Zachariae, Montesquieu and Aristotle, that had paid due attention to “real powers” and historical “forces” (families, territory, climate, etc.) that shaped political life, and distinguished this from the excessively abstract political theories of Rousseau, Kant, and Hegel, whom he believed had reduced political theory to mere legal theory (*Rechtslehre*) or natural law.⁸⁰ The emphasis on natural forces or “powers” (*Kräfte*), along with the distrust of purely speculative approaches to political thinking, had some resemblance to contemporary German writings, such as August Ludwig von Rochau's famous *Realpolitik* (however much

Frantz disagreed with Rochau's *kleindeutsch* sympathies).⁸¹ More importantly for my present argument, however, Frantz hinted in the *Vorschule* at the connection between “atomised” individualism, liberalism, and militarism that he would later discern in the North German Confederation. His idea was that the individualistic foundations of liberalism, which made the free consent of individuals the basis of political authority, had paved the way for military government in a succession of European states. Cromwell's military regime and, more emphatically, the Napoleonic Empire, were the predictable results of attempts to ground political authority on “liberal” rational and individualistic foundations.⁸² Frantz saw these dynamics as playing out repeatedly among nineteenth-century European states, especially as the politics of liberal individualism coincided with the materialism unleashed by the modern money-economy. According to Frantz, liberalism had a kind of self-undermining quality, as its tendency to produce social atomisation was accompanied by an ever-increasing “mechanical” state power that placed political freedom beyond reach. His conclusion was that “the more that liberalism predominates, the more political life (*Staatsleben*) succumbs to military government (*Militairherrschaft*); as experience has proved almost everywhere.”⁸³

The association between Caesarism and liberalism was made much more explicitly in Frantz's 1870 *Naturlehre des Staates als Grundlage aller Staatswissenschaft*, a work he presented as both the revision and completion of his earlier project for a new “political physiology.” The purpose of this book, advertised loud and clear in its first pages, was to correct the confusion in which modern political thought was mired, and hence to supply new intellectual resources for navigating the crisis, or what he called the “process of destruction” (*Zersetzungsprozess*), afflicting modern Europe's politics.⁸⁴ Although he attacked many of his predecessors in political theory (including, again, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel and F. J. Stahl), the key intellectual target of the *Naturlehre* was the idea of a modern, democratically-

legitimated, liberal-constitutional order, which Frantz termed the *Repräsentativsystem*.⁸⁵ It was in the context of this attack on the intellectual (even metaphysical) foundations of liberal representation that Frantz explicitly invoked the issue of Caesarism.

Once again, the key to Frantz's identification of liberalism with Caesarism lay in his claim that liberalism conceived of society as a mere association of abstract, atomised individuals (*Haufen atomer Individuen*).⁸⁶ On this definition, liberalism was the heir of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century natural law theory, which was also based on a disembodied and unhistorical vision of a purely legal subject. According to Frantz, liberalism understood the state in highly attenuated terms as a "society of human beings" (*eine Gesellschaft von Menschen*), while reducing political authority to a merely legal institution (*Rechtsanstalt*).⁸⁷ Once this highly individualistic conception of society was combined with the democratic conceptions of popular rule unleashed by the French Revolution, the inevitable outcome was the rise of Napoleonic-style military regimes:

Since then [i.e. the French Revolution], the single task has been to secure the individual's freedom and self-dependence; all the rest, it was believed, would follow on from this. This has not happened however: rather, where the dissolution of the old order has been most fully accomplished, and where the entire nation has been transformed into a mass of atomised individuals (*Summe atomer Individuen*), the much-hoped for system of freedom (*Freiheitssystem*) could not subsist, because of the lack of all binding powers (*Bindekräften*). Such a situation must, rather, yield to the Napoleonic coercive system (*Zwangssystem*), as the completely natural result of revolution. The Napoleonic system rests, on the one hand, on the mass of individuals and completely recognises individual freedom (though, admittedly, only in relation to

private life), while everything else, on the other hand, is ruled by the central power, which maintains the necessary order through artificial coercive means, among which the army and the police occupy the first place.⁸⁸

A few sentences after this passage, Frantz drove home the point that liberalism now rendered all of Europe, rather than France alone, vulnerable to “Napoleonism or Caesarism.”

It appears from beneath to be democratic, and from above to be monarchical: it should, however, be seen neither as a democracy nor as a monarchy. Rather, it constitutes a distinctive system all of its own, in which the organic binding powers are erased (without which neither a true republic nor a true monarchy can subsist), and where only the maintenance of external order is prescribed. That this kind of system has become not only possible but actually unavoidable in France is a direct result of the French Revolution, and especially of liberalism. The more prestige that is accorded to liberalism in other countries, the more Caesaristic tendencies will be unleashed there as well.⁸⁹

It might be added that Frantz’s perception of liberalism’s tendency to foster militarism and Caesarism resonates interestingly with recent historiography on the relationship between liberalism and empire in nineteenth-century political thought.⁹⁰ As he wrote, liberalism had unleashed “imperial tendencies” (*imperialistischen Tendenzen*) across modern Europe.⁹¹ Frantz might in this sense be seen as an early, perceptive critic of the tendency of liberal regimes to create imperial dynamics.

The next part of the argument was to relate Caesarism to the logic of the “representative system” (*Repräsentativsystem*). Broadly speaking, Frantz was a critic of modern conceptions of representative government, which he saw as the result of flawed attempts to adapt Rousseau’s political thought (which, as Frantz recognised, actually eschewed representation) to large territorial states.⁹² He dismissed the fiction – which he likened to a *camera obscura* – by which the will of the sovereign people could be presumed to be concentrated in a group of elected deputies.⁹³ Frantz developed this line of argument in the crucial fourth book of the *Naturlehre*, which was devoted to the topic of representation (*Volksvertretung*). Some of this was fairly typical mid-nineteenth-century criticism of the viability of universal suffrage for socially stratified contemporary societies. But his more intriguing argument centred on the capacity of modern notions of representation, especially as these had developed in the egalitarian traditions of French republicanism, to generate Caesarist or Napoleonic political regimes. According to Frantz, the logic of representation permitted Louis-Napoleon to legitimately claim that he represented, or “personified,” the entirety of the French people, whose unitary will (*Volkswille*) he now embodied.⁹⁴ Once one admitted the idea that the popular will could somehow be transferred to a representative body or agency, there was no logical obstacle to the embodiment – or personification – of the people’s will in a single authoritarian leader. Here Frantz was arguing that liberal theories of representative government contained no barrier against the rise of “personification,” a key term in the vocabulary of nineteenth-century Bonapartism (as set out, for instance, in Louis-Napoleon’s famous 1839 *Des idées napoléoniennes*).⁹⁵ As Frantz memorably summarized: “Once everything depends merely on election, then the people need only elect one individual, e.g. Louis-Napoleon, and whatever this individual desires, that is the will of the people, which can be equally well represented by its own elected Emperor (*Kaiser*) as by a numerous assembly (*Kammer*), which can in this case be deemed totally superfluous. What, then,

should we think of this representative system (*Repräsentativsystem*), which can be transformed into Caesarism, just as easily as one turns one's hand over?"⁹⁶ Even more pointedly, he wrote that "every abstract system finally contradicts itself...Individualism tends towards Caesarism, and the unique and indivisible republic tends towards the unique and indivisible dictatorship."⁹⁷

All this provided Frantz with the ammunition he needed for his primary strategic aim in the *Naturlehre*, which was to demonstrate the hidden Caesarist dangers lurking in the recently-created North German Confederation. The establishment of the Prussian-dominated *Nordbund* in 1866, following Prussia's victory in the Austro-Prussian war, along with Otto von Bismarck's introduction of universal suffrage as the basis of elections to the *Reichstag*, combined all of Frantz's nightmares simultaneously. To his mind, it looked like Germany was developing into precisely the kind of centralised, militaristic and democratically-legitimated state that had emerged, with such catastrophic results, in post-revolutionary France. These developments threatened to destroy forever the possibility of constructing a healthy German federation that would fulfil Germany's "task" (*Beruf*) in maintaining European balance. Frantz characterised the state-form that was emerging in Germany as an uninspiring combination of economic guardian and military overlord.⁹⁸ More pointedly, he claimed that Prussia's political and military dominance of the new system would lead directly to the replication of Caesarist politics in Germany, a development which added a further threat to the stability of Europe:

The entire nation has collapsed into three pieces, the reunification of which will only take place in the distant future, after many conflicts. The former federal states, furthermore, have been coerced into an oppressive military system, and in the new

Nordbund, which has partially stepped into the place of the old *Bund*, political institutions (*öffentlichen Verhältnissen*) increasingly take on the character of Caesarism, which must unavoidably be the case in the complete absence of a historical and moral (*sittlich*) foundation. Finally, the entire European state system has lost its most important support (*Halt*), and now rests merely on the tip of a bayonette.⁹⁹

Here Frantz can be read as answering Heinrich von Treitschke's earlier assertion that a united Germany under Prussian leadership would never be threatened by the "ghost of Caesarism." Treitschke had made this claim in his 1864 *Bundesstaat und Einheitsstaat*, in which he attacked the "particularist" devotees of the German federal tradition and argued that a Prussian-led Germany would not fall under a permanent rule of the sword (*Herrschaft des Säbels*).¹⁰⁰ One of the main claims of Treitschke's slightly later writings on French Bonapartism (1865-71) was that the vitality of Germany's monarchical traditions would continue to immunise it against the combination of democracy and tyranny that characterised the "state life" of contemporary France.¹⁰¹ Frantz's claim that there existed a "good deal of *Napoleonismus*" in Bismarck's politics ("Und wie viel Napoleonismus steckt in der heutigen Bismarck'schen Politik!") thus not only sheds an interesting contemporary light on twentieth-century controversies about Bismarck's "Bonapartism," but can also be read as a direct rejoinder to Treitschke's position.¹⁰² His warning was that to transform Germany into a centralised, potentially democratic, and unitary state (*Einheitsstaat*) was precisely to open a door to the kind of populist, coercive, military regime that characterised Caesarism in its French context.

I would like to draw two main conclusions from this examination of how Frantz confronted the problems of French *Napoleonismus* and assessed its implications for Europe. The central argument I have sought to make is that the modern image of Frantz as a kind of German Bonapartist is deeply misleading. The image itself is the result of concentrating on one quite famous text – *Louis Napoleon* – and of drawing general conclusions from that text about his political preferences. Yet, as I have argued, *Louis Napoleon* was something of an outlier within the range of Frantz’s intellectual output, and in any case his endorsement of *Napoleonismus* as a viable regime for modern France by no means implies that he wished to see it replicated elsewhere. Indeed, in several writings from the same year he published *Louis Napoleon*, he explicitly rejected Caesarism as a model for Prussia, and instead proposed a reformed dynastic monarchy, based on a closer “social bond” between the king and the people, and where active monarchical leadership in the areas of social reform and industrial policy would serve to neutralise the appeal of democracy and liberalism. As this further suggests, the nature of Frantz’s alternative to revolutionary democracy and modern liberalism needs to be handled with considerable care. In particular, the designation of Frantz as a German or “Prussian” conservative is far too crude. Throughout his work, Frantz rejected “Legitimism” or “Restorationism” in political thought, and levelled particular criticisms at the “Restorationism” of the Gerlach circle, who drew heavily on the political thought of Karl Friedrich von Haller and Friedrich Julius Stahl.¹⁰³ A better prospect for clarifying Frantz’s political thought lies in a revised appreciation of the depth of his federalist alternative to the modern nation-state. If in one sense he looked backwards towards the old German *Reich* (and, even more distantly, to ancient Greek federal arrangements) in another sense he looked forward to a world without centralised states. This might still be described as a kind of German conservatism, but it was clearly one sharply at odds with the state-

centred, nationalistic, and military ethos that has become the stereotypical image of conservatism in its Prussian guise.

More broadly still, Frantz's example suggests the need for some amendments to the way in which the intellectual history of Bonapartism and Caesarism has been written, especially from a German perspective. It is perhaps understandable that the history of these concepts has often been motivated by larger questions about the intellectual origins of fascism, especially since many of the earliest considerations of fascism were themselves organised around comparisons with Bonapartism or Caesarism.¹⁰⁴ The question about the relationship between nineteenth-century Bonapartism and twentieth-century fascist dictatorship has also been a hidden (and sometimes not-so-hidden) subtext of German post-war historical scholarship, including a notorious controversy over Bismarck's "Bonapartism."¹⁰⁵ Frantz's example provides a useful reminder of some of the dangers that might arise from efforts to construct a genealogy of modern fascism in its German guise. Put bluntly, the resonance of Frantz's ideas in 1933 cannot possibly tell us anything about his intentions in 1852. Furthermore, although similarities might be discerned between Frantz's and Carl Schmitt's criticisms of the mechanisms of liberal parliamentary representation, Frantz did not in any sense endorse the "dictatorial and Caesaristic methods" that Schmitt claimed were perfectly compatible with true democratic homogeneity.¹⁰⁶ Finally, Frantz's more unusual association of liberal parliamentarism with Caesarism should guard us against the temptation of constructing nineteenth-century intellectual history as a kind of binary struggle between *Parlamentarismus* and *Cäsarismus* (to borrow the title of Michael Stürmer's 1973 book). As I remarked at the beginning, it is essential to avoid a hidden teleology which transforms the nineteenth-century critics of liberal parliamentarism into the "precursors" or "forerunners" of the spokesmen for the "true democracy" of plebiscitary Caesarism in the 1920s. Frantz's

delineation of modern *Napoleonismus* was not a stepping-stone on the road towards German fascism.

¹ These themes are captured especially well in Häne, *Die Staatsideen des Konstantin Frantz*.

² For useful introductions to these rival traditions, see Berger, *The Search for Normality*, 21-55; Green, “The Federal Alternative?”

³ For early discussions of Frantz as a federalist, see Heuss, “Constantin Frantz: Deutschland und der Föderalismus”; Häne, *Die Staatsideen des Konstantin Frantz*, 5-19; Coutinho, “The Federalism of Karl Marlo and Konstantin Frantz”.

⁴ Meinecke, *The German Catastrophe*, 13.

⁵ Schnabel, “Bismarck und die Nationen,” 91-108. A partial translation is available in Otto Pflanze, ed., *The Unification of Germany*, 88-98.

⁶ Becker, “Der Föderalist Constantin Frantz”. Becker provides a short biography of Frantz, and the most comprehensive guide to the scholarship on him since the late nineteenth century.

⁷ Frantz, *Masse oder Volk: Louis Napoleon*.

⁸ Franz Kemper, “Vorwort” and “Einleitung” in Frantz, *Masse oder Volk*, 7, 14. On Mayer’s own view of Frantz as offering “the first ‘coherent’ philosophy of the plebiscitarian principle,” see Mayer’s “Introduction” to Tocqueville, *Recollections*, xxxv-xxxvi. It is worth noting that the phrase “Masse oder Volk,” used in both Mayer’s 1933 and in Günther Maschke’s 1990 editions, did not appear in the title of the original 1852 edition.

⁹ Schaper, *Konstantin Frantz*, 151.

¹⁰ Viereck, *Metapolitics*, 3-4. The term “metapolitics”, which in Frantz’s hands was far removed from any association with narrow German nationalism, appeared in Frantz, “Offener Brief an Richard Wagner”, 169.

¹¹ Koselleck & Richter, “Crisis”, 383; Koselleck, “‘Neuzeit’”, 250-251.

¹² Groh, “Cäsarismus, Napoleonismus, Bonapartismus,” 752. Many of the writers treated by Groh had already been discussed in Gollwitzer, “Der Cäsarismus Napoleons III”; 23-75; translated into English as Gollwitzer, “The Caesarism of Napoleon III”.

¹³ Meuter and Otten, “Constantin Frantz – ein bonapartistischer Vorläufer Carl Schmitts?”.

The issue of antisemitism is obviously of crucial importance for an overall assessment of Frantz’s thought, although I am unable to pursue the question here (it would require a separate article). On the “Nazi-like doctrine”, and an overemphasis on Frantz’s “pan-Germanism”, see Philippson, “Constantin Frantz”; see also Rose, *German Question/Jewish Question*, 341-57. For a balanced account of Frantz’s attitude to the emancipation of German Jews, and his assertion of the incompatibility between Jewish nationhood and German federalism, see Becker, “Der Föderalist Constantin Frantz,” 206-7.

¹⁴ Barclay, “Prussian conservatives and the problem of Bonapartism”, 77.

¹⁵ Skinner, “Meaning and understanding in the history of ideas”.

¹⁶ Schmitt himself was aware of Frantz’s work, although – interestingly – his sparse comments on Frantz were generally critical. See e.g. Schmitt, *Dictatorship*, 85. For an excellent account of Schmitt’s interpretation of the political thought of Donoso Cortés, which provides an interesting perspective on some of the themes developed in the present article, see Fox, “Schmitt’s Use and Abuse of Donoso Cortés.”

¹⁷ La Vopa, “A New Intellectual History?”

¹⁸ Frantz, *Louis Napoleon*. Subsequent references, unless otherwise indicated, are to this edition. For an explicit comparison between Marx and Frantz, see J. P. Mayer’s pseudonymous “Einleitung,” in Frantz, *Masse oder Volk*, 13-14. Proudhon’s book appeared in July 1852; see Proudhon, *La Révolution sociale*. For the wider German debate about the

French Second Empire and Bonapartism, see Gollwitzer, “Der Cäsarismus Napoleons III”; see also the brief discussion in Nippel, *Ancient and Modern Democracy*, 294.

¹⁹ Bauer, *Rußland und das Germanenthum*. On Bauer’s abandonment of his earlier, Hegel-inspired republicanism after the failure of the 1848-49 revolutions, see Moggach, *The Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer*, 180-187. Frantz himself was more strongly committed to the *Naturphilosophie* of Schelling than to Hegel’s philosophy of spirit from the early 1840s; see Frantz, *Grundzüge des wahren und wirklichen absoluten Idealismus*, 23, 45, 71-4; for his later criticism of Hegel’s political views, see Frantz, *Naturlehre*, 14, 31-34.

²⁰ This text has been published, with a valuable commentary and contextualisation, as Sautter and Frantz, “Constantin Frantz und die Zweite Republik”.

²¹ This contrast is developed in Barclay, “Prussian conservatives and the problem of Bonapartism”, 76-8.

²² Frantz, *Die Staatskrankheit*, 3-4, 59, 111-12, 124.

²³ For Frantz’s critique of liberalism and the “representative system” before 1852 see Frantz, *Ueber Gegenwart und Zukunft*, 43-65; Frantz, *Von der deutschen Föderation*, 59; Sautter and Frantz, “Constantin Frantz und die Zweite Republik”, 577-79.

²⁴ Sautter and Frantz, “Constantin Frantz und die Zweite Republik”, 577.

²⁵ Sautter and Frantz, “Constantin Frantz und die Zweite Republik”, 581.

²⁶ Frantz, *Louis Napoleon*, 64.

²⁷ Frantz, *Louis Napoleon*, 63.

²⁸ Frantz, *Louis Napoleon*, 43-44.

²⁹ Frantz, *Louis Napoleon*, 61. Frantz’s distinction between temporary and permanent forms of dictatorship echoed Friedrich Schlegel’s 1796 *Versuch über den Begriff des Republikanismus*, in which Schlegel claimed that a “transitory dictatorship” could be seen as a “republican form of representation.” See Schlegel, “Essay on the Concept of Republicanism,” 99, 102.

³⁰ Frantz, *Louis Napoleon*, 15.

³¹ Frantz, *Louis Napoleon*, 63.

³² Frantz, *Louis Napoleon*, 61-2.

³³ Frantz, *Louis Napoleon*, 64, 67-72.

³⁴ Frantz, *Louis Napoleon*, 64. For an earlier nineteenth-century association between Hercules and Napoleonic politics, see Fourier, *Theory of the Four Movements*, 104: “All the Earth offers today is hideous political chaos which demands the strength of a new Hercules to purge it of the social monstrosities which disfigure it... This new Hercules is here. His great labours have already caused his name to resound from pole to pole, and humanity, accustomed by him to the sight of marvellous deeds, awaits a miracle which will alter the fate of the world.”

³⁵ Frantz, *Louis Napoleon*, 25.

³⁶ Frantz, *Louis Napoleon*, 44-5.

³⁷ Frantz, *Untersuchungen*, 411-12.

³⁸ Frantz, *Louis Napoleon*, 57.

³⁹ For the best study of the “social monarchy” idea in Prussia, which also provides a valuable discussion of Radowitz, see Beck, *Origins of the Authoritarian Welfare State*. For an illuminating discussion of Stein’s somewhat different conception of the monarch as a neutral arbitrator of modern social conflicts, see Siclovan, *Lorenz Stein and German Socialism*, 124-26. On the “social question” more broadly, see Grimmer-Solem, *The Rise of Historical Economics*. On Manteuffel’s belief that the Prussian monarchy had to recognise and deal with social divisions, see Barclay, “Prussian Conservatives and Bonapartism”, 77.

⁴⁰ Frantz proposed a close relationship between “king” and “masses” in his contributions to the *Rheinischen Beobachter* of July and August 1847; for passages and discussion, see Quadflieg, “Dokumente zum Werden von Constantin Frantz,” 336-337.

⁴¹ Frantz, *Die Staatskrankheit*, 56, 69.

⁴² Frantz, *Die Staatskrankheit*, 56-7, 59, 78, 99-100, 111-12, 123-5.

⁴³ Frantz, *Die Staatskrankheit*, 124.

⁴⁴ There is a useful summary of Frantz’s book in Gollwitzer, *Europabild und Europagedanke*, 297-302. For a sense of the contemporary reception of Frantz’s book, see Julius Fröbel, *Die Bestandtheile der deutschen Parteien*, 53, which described the book as the “most significant” contribution to understanding the German situation in the period. See also Fröbel, *Die Forderungen der deutschen Politik*.

⁴⁵ On the geopolitical context, see Simms, *Europe: The Struggle for Supremacy*, 225-30.

⁴⁶ On the intriguing debate between Friedrich Engels and Ferdinand Lassalle over Germany’s role in Italian politics, see Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx*, 364-367.

⁴⁷ Frantz, *Untersuchungen*, 333-334; Frantz, *Das neue Deutschland*, 385; see also Frantz, *Die Religion des Nationalliberalismus*, 71-72.

⁴⁸ Early evidence of Frantz’s interest in Germany’s role within Europe appears in a letter of 1847, in which Frantz discussed Germany’s appropriate handling of Panslavism and Poland; see Frantz to Gerd Eilers, 16 June 1847, reproduced in Quadflieg, “Dokumente zum Werden von Constantin Frantz,” 334-5. For a broad sense of the issues from a contemporary perspective, see Eötvös, *Die Nationalitäten-Frage*; and Bluntschli, *The Theory of the State*, 92-100.

⁴⁹ Frantz, *Untersuchungen*, 318.

⁵⁰ Frantz, *Untersuchungen*, 385-89.

⁵¹ On Fichte’s critique of the balance of power, see Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation*, 160-1.

⁵² Frantz, *Untersuchungen*, 74.

⁵³ Anon., *Die europäische Pentarchie*.

⁵⁴ Frantz, *Untersuchungen*, 41; Bruno Bauer, *Rußland und der Germanenthum*, 7-8.

⁵⁵ Frantz, *Untersuchungen*, 122.

⁵⁶ Frantz, *Untersuchungen*, 131.

⁵⁷ Frantz, *Untersuchungen*, 132.

⁵⁸ Frantz, *Untersuchungen*, 420.

⁵⁹ Frantz, *Untersuchungen*, 124.

⁶⁰ Frantz, *Untersuchungen*, 133.

⁶¹ Frantz, *Untersuchungen*, 395.

⁶² Frantz, *Untersuchungen*, 432.

⁶³ See, for example, Guéronnière, *L’Empereur Napoléon III et l’Italie*.

⁶⁴ Frantz, *Untersuchungen*, 115-16, 136.

⁶⁵ Frantz, *Untersuchungen*, 421.

⁶⁶ Frantz, *Untersuchungen*, 170.

⁶⁷ Frantz, *Untersuchungen*, 187-248.

⁶⁸ Frantz’s definition of a Great Power (*Größmacht*) as a “self-sufficient and independent power” clearly echoed Ranke’s description of Frederick II’s Prussia as a “self-sufficient power,” “needing no alliance, depending only on itself,” even while Frantz rejected the conclusion that Prussia satisfied these criteria. See Ranke, “The Great Powers,” 43.

⁶⁹ See also the discussion in Quadflieg, “Dokumente zum Werden von Constantin Frantz,” 339.

⁷⁰ Frantz, *Untersuchungen*, 373-4. The contrast was somewhat stylised, but Frantz – like many contemporaries across Europe in the period – was here associating the Roman imperial tradition with conquest, unmediated state sovereignty, and political centralisation, while describing the German *Kaisertum* as compatible with federalism and limitations on monarchical power. For a well-known version of the contrast that Frantz himself referred to, see Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation*, 45. For the wider intellectual discussion of the *Kaiseridee*, see Fehrenbach, *Wandlungen des deutschen Kaisergedankens*.

⁷¹ Frantz, *Untersuchungen*, 391.

⁷² Frantz, *Untersuchungen*, 358.

⁷³ Frantz, *Untersuchungen*, 392.

⁷⁴ For an excellent example of this, see Eckardt, *Nationalität oder Freiheit?*.

⁷⁵ Fröbel described *Imperialismus* as the bastard offspring of democracy and centralisation and claimed that *kleindeutsch* centralism would lead directly to Bonapartism in Germany itself; see Fröbel, *Die Forderungen der deutschen Politik*, 26.

⁷⁶ For explicit discussion of the army in relationship to Germany unity, see Frantz, *Die Quelle alles Übels*, 36, 123.

⁷⁷ For a later iteration of the theme, see Frantz, *Naturlehre*, 238-9.

⁷⁸ For a comparative survey of British and German conceptions of liberalism in this period, see Leonhard, “From European Liberalism to the Languages of Liberalisms”. For a recent, sophisticated reappraisal, see Bell, “What is Liberalism?”, although Bell concentrates primarily on Anglo-American material.

⁷⁹ Frantz, *Naturlehre*, xiv-xv.

⁸⁰ Frantz, *Naturlehre*, 322-5.

⁸¹ On Rochau, see Doll, *Recht, Politik und ‘Realpolitik’*; more generally, see Bew, *Realpolitik*. For Rochau’s critique of the “*Kleinstaaterei*” of the German Confederation, see [Rochau], *Briefe eines Deutschen*, 2-3.

⁸² Frantz, *Vorschule*, 334.

⁸³ Frantz, *Vorschule*, 291-2.

⁸⁴ Frantz, *Naturlehre*, iii.

⁸⁵ Frantz, *Naturlehre*, 2, 5.

⁸⁶ Frantz, *Naturlehre*, 160.

⁸⁷ Frantz, *Naturlehre*, 98. There are hints elsewhere in the *Naturlehre* that Frantz was echoing the nineteenth-century German criticism of Roman law, which saw Roman law, as modernised in the Napoleonic *Code Civil*, as the legal basis of modern Bonapartism; see e.g. Frantz, *Naturlehre*, 409-14. On the background to this debate, see Kelley, “What pleases the prince”.

⁸⁸ Frantz, *Naturlehre*, 173.

⁸⁹ Frantz, *Naturlehre*, 174.

⁹⁰ See, for example, Pitts, *A Turn to Empire* and, most recently, the essays collected in Bell, *Reordering the World*. On German liberal imperialism see especially Fitzpatrick, *Liberal Imperialism in Germany*.

⁹¹ Frantz, *Naturlehre*, 239-40.

⁹² Frantz, *Naturlehre*, 272-3.

⁹³ Frantz, *Naturlehre*, 221.

⁹⁴ Frantz, *Naturlehre*, 280.

⁹⁵ On Napoleonic democracy, see Bonaparte, *Des idées napoléoniennes*, 21, n. For context, see Bluche, *Le bonapartisme*, 232-249.

⁹⁶ Frantz, *Naturlehre*, 272-3.

⁹⁷ Frantz, *Naturlehre*, 332.

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- ⁹⁸ Frantz, *Naturlehre*, 74.
- ⁹⁹ Frantz, *Naturlehre*, 178.
- ¹⁰⁰ Treitschke, “Bundesstaat und Einheitsstaat”, 83-4.
- ¹⁰¹ Treitschke, “Frankreichs Staatsleben und der Bonapartismus”, 53, 55.
- ¹⁰² Frantz, *Naturlehre*, 223.
- ¹⁰³ Frantz criticised the idea of “Restoration” in Frantz, *Die Staatskrankheit*, 48. On the Gerlachs see Barclay, “Prussian conservatives and the problem of Bonapartism”, 76-8; see also Beck, *Origins of the Authoritarian Welfare State*, ch. 1.
- ¹⁰⁴ For one obvious example, see Thalheimer, “On Fascism” [1930].
- ¹⁰⁵ In addition to the conceptual histories of Gollwitzer, Groh and Koselleck cited above, see the following: Wehler, *Das deutsche Kaiserreich*; Stürmer, *Regierung und Reichstag*; Gall, “Bismarck und der Bonapartismus”. See also Stürmer’s response to Gall in Stürmer, “Cäsarismus oder das Problem, das es nicht gegeben haben kann”.
- ¹⁰⁶ For this claim, see Carl Schmitt, *Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, 16-17.

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